

Session 2

April 19, 2020

WHY THE RESURRECTION MATTERS

1 Corinthians 15:20-28; 54-58

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (15:19).

The good news of the gospel is only good news if it's true and verifiable. Christ's resurrection—*prophesied* by the prophets, *predicted* by Christ, *proclaimed* by the angels and *preached* by the disciples—was *proven* by the testimony of many witnesses. The verses that follow Paul's bleak pronouncement of verse 19 (above) are meant to nullify any notion that the resurrection of Christ was anything other than marvelous, miraculous, and victorious; not only for Christ Himself, but for all who claim Him as Lord. Four principles stand out.

Restoration (vv. 20-23). Verse 20 counters the naysayers' skepticism from preceding verses (see especially vv. 12-18). The overwhelming proof is that Christ did indeed rise from the grave, and the effects are monumental. The phrase *first fruits* is self-explanatory. They were the first sheaves of grain harvested that were waved by the priest before God's altar. They were the first, but not the last; they were the promise that more would follow. God's original design for man was *life* (see Gen. 2:7). Sin entered the world through one man (Adam), which resulted in death for all (Rom. 5:12). But the curse of death was reversed, and life was restored by one man (Christ). He was the first raised, but His resurrection is the promise that more will follow (v. 23).

Culmination (vv. 24-28). Paul's anticipation of the day of Christ's appearance moves him to look even further into the future, when everything about this age comes to a close. Remember, Christ's titles include Prophet (proclaiming the Kingdom of God), Priest (providing access to the Kingdom of God), and King (ruling over the Kingdom of God). Here, Paul reminds the church that it all comes back to God. Christ's power and authority culminate in giving it all back to its rightful owner. But that can't happen until all the enemies of God are vanquished. Notice the word “everything,” used five times in verses 27-28. Once *everything* is under His feet, God's ownership is restored; that is, God will be “all in all” (v. 28). Since the last enemy is death (v. 26), Christ had to conquer the grave. And He did so through His resurrection.

Exultation (vv. 54-57). For the believer, salvation is full: we are saved body, soul, and spirit. The intervening verses describe the glorified body believers receive when raised. This glorification process is necessary because “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (v. 50). For this reason, death is not an end, but a necessary transition. Our clean and pure soul (which has justified by God) will ultimately be joined with an equally clean and pure body (which will be glorified by God). So, if death is necessary, why is it described as an enemy? (v. 26). In this case, it's because of what death *represents*. Remember, God is the giver of life. Jesus was described as “the life” and “light of men” (John 1:4). But the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). By abolishing death, Christ did for us what we could not do for ourselves. By His resurrection, He took the sting from death and declared victory over the grave on our behalf.

Continuation (v. 58). Up to this point, the apostle has argued that the good news of Christ's gospel is certain. It has been demonstrated by His victory over death and the grave, an event

verified by a multitude of credible eyewitnesses. Furthermore, because He arose, we too will be raised, and even glorified in the process!

Following Paul's great shout of heavenly victory, however, his "therefore" brings us back down to earth. Because of these great truths, and the promises they represent, believers are encouraged to continue in their earthly walk with Christ; to remain firm in their faith and busy in their labors until He calls us home.